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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
David Paul Agnello et al : DECISION DISMISSING
Application No. 09/939,895 : PETITION UNDER
Filed: August 27, 2001 : 37 CFR 1.137(a)
Attorney Docket No. BU9-98-183-US2 :
:

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed September 7, 2004, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply, unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(d). The instant petition lacks item (3) above.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.113 in a timely manner to the final Office action mailed June 4, 2003, which set a shortened statutory period for reply of three (3) months. A reply under 37 CFR 1.113 is limited to an amendment that *prima facie* places the application in condition for allowance or a Notice of Appeal (and appeal fee required by 37 CFR 1.17(b)). No amendment *prima facie* placing the application in condition for

allowance or Notice of Appeal (and appeal fee) was timely filed, and no extensions of time under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) were obtained. Accordingly, the above-identified application became abandoned on September 5, 2003. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on August 24, 2004.

ISSUE

Petitioner states unavoidable delay was due to nonreceipt of the Advisory Action mailed on September 2, 2003.

APPLICABLE STATUTE AND RULE

35 U.S.C. § 133 states:

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Director in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Director that such delay was unavoidable.

37 CFR 1.135 states in pertinent part:

(a) If an applicant of a patent application fails to reply within the time period provided under § 1.134 and § 1.136, the application will become abandoned unless an Office action indicates otherwise;

(b) Prosecution of an application to save it from abandonment pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section must include such complete and proper reply as the condition of the application may require. The admission of, or refusal to admit, any amendment after final rejection or any amendment not responsive to the last action, or any related proceedings, will not operate to save the application from abandonment.

Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.

In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912) (quoting *Ex parte Pratt*, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also *Winkler v. Ladd*, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); *Ex parte Henrich*, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." *Smith v. Mossinghoff*, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." *Haines v. Quigg*, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

OPINION

The showing presented is insufficient to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a). In this regard, petitioner should note that a proper response to a final rejection (such as the Office action of June 4, 2003) must be in the form of an appeal, Request for Continued (RCE) pursuant to the provisions of 37 CFR 1.114, or the filing of a continuation application. The filing of an amendment placing the application in condition for allowance is permitted under the rules, but entry of such an amendment is not a matter of right. It is unfortunate that the Advisory Action of September 2, 2003 was not received by applicant. However, it is clear from 37 CFR

1.116 that abandonment of an application is risked when an amendment after a final Office action is filed. The rule clearly indicates that the mere filing of an amendment does not relieve petitioner of the duty of taking appropriate action to save the application from abandonment. Therefore, whether petitioner received an Advisory Action or not prior to the expiration of the six month statutory period, the only right petitioner was entitled to was that of appealing the final rejection, filing an RCE pursuant to the provisions of 37 CFR 1.114 or by filing a continuing application pursuant to the provisions of 37 CFR 1.53(b). This application became abandoned for failure on the part of petitioner to file the appropriate reply to continue prosecution. Petitioner has not stated what steps were taken to maintain pendency of the application after the filing of the response received on July 31, 2003 in view of the terms set out in 37 CFR 1.116. When petitioner did not receive a response before the expiration of the six month statutory period, the appropriate action would have been to (1) inquire as to the status of the application, or (2) file a Notice of Appeal (RCE or a continuing application) to maintain pendency of the application.

As noted in MPEP 711.03(c) :

Delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP, however, does not constitute "unavoidable" delay. See *Haines*, 673 F. Supp. at 317, 5 USPQ2d at 1132; *Vincent v. Mossinghoff*, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); *Smith v. Diamond*, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); *Potter v. Dann*, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); *Ex parte Murray*, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (1891). For example, as 37 CFR 1.116 and 1.135(b) are manifest that proceedings concerning an amendment after final rejection will not operate to avoid abandonment of the application in the absence of a timely and proper appeal, a delay is not "unavoidable" when the applicant simply permits the maximum extendable statutory period for reply to a final Office action to expire while awaiting a notice of allowance or other action.

CONCLUSION

The circumstances of this application do not demonstrate that the delay in filing a proper and timely reply to the final Office action of June 4, 2003 was unavoidable. Accordingly, the application will not be revived under the unavoidable provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(a) and the application remains abandoned.

ALTERNATIVE RELIEF

Petitioner should consider filing a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an "unintentionally" abandoned application without a showing that the delay in prosecution or in late payment of an issue fee was "unavoidable." This amendment to 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) has been implemented in 37 CFR 1.137(b). An "unintentional" petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the \$1,500 petition fee.

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

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Any questions concerning this matter may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3218.

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